

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DUBLIN 02313 271424Z
ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CAB-05 CIAE-00 COME-00
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FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
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INFO AMCONSUL MONTREAL
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AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

UNCLAS DUBLIN 02313

USEEC ALSO FOR EMBASSY
MONTREAL FOR US REPICAO

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAIR, EI
SUBJECT: CIVAIR: IRISH PRESS LETS FLY ON US PROMOTION
OF LOWER AIR FARES

1. SUMMARY AND COMMENT: IRISH PRESS FRONT PAGE
ARTICLE ON JULY 26 STRONGLY CRITICIZES US EFFORT TO
PROMOTE LOWER TRANSATLANTIC AIR FARES. THE ARTICLE
QUESTIONS US MOTIVES AND SUGGESTS THAT OUR ULTIMATE
AIM IS TO FORCE SMALLER AIRLINES OUT OF BUSINESS. WE
WOULD NOT OVEREMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS SINGLE
ARTICLE, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF VERY LIMITED PUBLIC
DEBATE HERE ON THIS ISSUE. GOI OFFICIALS ARE SPLIT ON
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LOWER FARES. THOSE EAGER TO PROMOTE TOURIST EARNINGS
ARE ENTHUSIASTIC WHILE THOSE CONCERNED ABOUT THE
FINANCIAL CONDITION OF THE NATIONAL AIRLINE TAKE A
NEGATIVE VIEW. END SUMMARY.

2. JULY 26 FRONT PAGE ARTICLE BY IRISH PRESS FOREIGN
EDITOR JULIEN DE KASSEL STRONGLY CRITICIZES US EFFORT

TO BRING DOWN TRANSATLANTIC AIRFARES. IN THE STRONGEST LOCAL STATEMENT WE HAVE SEEN ON THIS ISSUE DE KASSEL QUESTIONS THE MOTIVATION BEHIND OUR EFFORTS AND ACCUSES US OF PRESSURING SMALLER EUROPEAN LINES TO ACCEPT PRICING POLICIES DETRIMENTAL TO THEIR OWN FINANCIAL WELL BEING. WE ARE ACCUSED OF ENGAGING IN AGGRESSIVE ARM-TWISTING VIS-A-VIS THE FRENCH, THE BELGIANS, AND THE DUTCH, WITH ALITALIA, SCANDINAVIAN AIRLINES AND AER LINGUS NEXT IN LINE. (AN AER LINGUS SPOKESMAN SUBSEQUENTLY DENIED THAT ANY PRESSURE HAD BEEN BROUGHT TO BEAR ON THE AIRLINE BY US AUTHORITIES). THE ARTICLE SUGGESTS THAT OUR ATTITUDE ON AIR FARES RESULTS FROM A DESIRE TO ENTICE MORE EUROPEANS TO VISIT THE US. THIS IS PART OF OUR "ALLEGED 'FREE COMPETITION POLICY', THOUGH IN OTHER COMMERCIAL SPHERES THE US GOVERNMENT IS ADOPTING INCREASINGLY PROTECTIONIST MEASURES". DE KASSEL ALSO ASCRIBES USG INTEREST IN PROMOTING CHEAP FARES TO DESIRE FOR A LARGE CIVIL AIRFLEET WHICH WOULD BE AVAILABLE FOR STRATEGIC PURPOSES "AT VIRTUALLY A MOMENT'S NOTICE."

3. THE STANDARD AER LINGUS ARGUMENT AGAINST FARE CUTTING IS QUOTED, I.E., THAT TRANSATLANTIC FARE CUTS WOULD THREATEN THEIR ECONOMIC VIABILITY. THE ARTICLE CONCLUDES BY SUGGESTING THAT AMERICAN POLICY ON AIR FARES SEEKS TO FORCE SMALLER EUROPEAN COMPANIES OUT OF EXISTENCE.
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THIS WOULD MEAN "THAT THE FIELD WOULD THEN BE LEFT WIDE OPEN FOR THE MAJOR AIRLINES. ONCE THEY HAD A MONOPOLY ALL TALK OF CUT-PRICE FARES WOULD DISAPPEAR". SHANNON

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